

**Yorkshire Friends Holiday School 2017
held at Bootham School 18 to 25 August 2017**

Media Power

Through our theme this week we have been challenged to think about the power of the media.

Holiday School member of staff Guy Milner introduced the topic with the customary interactive first session. After some mingling to get to know each other we discussed the very relevant topic of news and social media. How do we receive the news? How do we use social media?

Guy invited us to help him with his social media addiction after inviting us to think about simplicity and equality. He read from Quaker Faith and Practice 20.27:

“The testimony of outward simplicity began as a protest against the extravagance and snobbery which marked English society in the 1600s. In whatever forms this protest is maintained today, it must still be seen as a testimony against involvement with things which tend to dilute our energies and scatter our thoughts, reducing us to lives of triviality and mediocrity.”

Our sessions also touched on the importance of a sense of belonging – whether it is the armed forces’ tactics for recruiting the soldiers of the future, or Christians in northern Israel struggling to maintain their community despite their village being turned to rubble.

Keith Reeves gave us a fascinating insight into his role as an Ecumenical Accompanier in the Middle East. We were downhearted to learn of the tough regime restricting the rights of Palestinians. We heard about Keith’s arrest so soon into his time on the West Bank and what his group managed to do in their very brief alternative tour of Israel. It was when visiting the Christians of Iqrit that he reflected on their sense of belonging and commitment to maintaining their traditions and connections with each other. They hold an annual event rather like holiday school and during our day of social action later in the week, a small group made a video to share with them to send greetings.

Our second external speaker, John Bourton of Veterans for Peace, also facilitated a thought-provoking and powerful session. His direct experience of military life gave him particular insight into the attraction of joining the army but also the hardships veterans face.

Nest groups provide us with a special space to make new friends of different ages, bonding through games and discussion. On Thursday, our nest groups were given an extra task in the session. Building on the persuasive role of images in the media, we were given pictures that we then had to present a media campaign for. As we persuaded our audience to be either for or against clowns, sharks, fast

food, the Royal Family or Facebook, it gave us an entertaining opportunity to work together and display creativity and enthusiasm.

This was the second year we have held a Day of Social Action and once again it proved popular. The peace vigil was well received by passers by in York, the ideas exchange prompted discussion that continued throughout the day, and a range of letters are on their way to MPs, schools and Chief Executive Officers.

In addition to nest groups, we build our community with activities, free time socials, swimming, tuck shop visits, and dinner-time conversation. The first day can be daunting even for those of us who have been to holiday school for many years, but friendships quickly form and strengthen. Friendships which often become lifelong.

We thank Bootham School for catering for us so well and appreciate the facilities available to us. Outdoor socials on the field have been a particular highlight; we enjoy the extra space for games and dances and this week have been fortunate with the weather. Of course the field is also the venue for potted sports. There is much laughter as people launch themselves down the water slide and get soaked in the games.

Our days are framed by the morning Meetings for Worship and evening epilogues. They are our quiet times for reflection and are an integral part of Holiday School, deepening the spiritual dimension of our time together.

But it is the people who make Holiday School. We accept and appreciate each other as individuals. We don't need to pretend to be anything other than ourselves. We belong.

We are grateful to our student helpers for all the work they do from welcoming us as we arrive to making the last night social fun and special. We are sad to say goodbye to our leavers but hope they will stay in touch.

We are grateful for each other. A passage read in Ministry included the words "These are people who want us to be exactly as we are."

Although we started the week thinking about social media and the hold it can have over us, we will no doubt enjoy the benefits it can bring as we keep in touch with our friends over the weeks to come.

We have become an extended family. Holiday School has given us that important sense of belonging and we will always carry part of that special Holiday School magic with us.